

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE AMERICAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP:
RELEVANCE IN A POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT**

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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ABSTRACT

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The U.S. and Israel have always enjoyed a very “special” relationship. Together they share tremendous success: one as a regional power and the other as a global power. In addition, both share a strong sense of national identity and are stable, vibrant democracies. This relationship has been critical during the period of cold war politics from 1948-1989. However, since the breakup of the Soviet Union, this relationship has been the basis for much of the intensified hatred aimed at the U.S. as the world’s sole super power. This paper will examine the nature of this “special” relationship prior to and following the end of the Cold War and how it fits within the overall Mideast focus. Is it relevant in a post-Cold War scenario? How does the relationship compare to the relationship we have with Egypt and Saudi Arabia? What are the cost/benefits of the relationship? What role should the U.S. play in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? I will examine the issue from the earliest stages of Zionism through the British Mandate and other geopolitical issues that have served to frame this conflict/relationship into the crisis that exists today. Within that context, a critical examination will be done to assess whether the current U.S.-Israeli relationship remains viable or whether we should refocus our efforts in a different direction.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank Professor Jerry Comello for his professional support and guidance in helping me to complete this strategic research project. His efforts and support ensured that the experience was enjoyable and professionally rewarding. I would especially like to thank my wife Lisa and son Matt, who put up with me throughout this “enjoyable” experience.

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AMERICAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP: RELEVANCE IN A POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT

Politicians and analysts have often characterized the U.S.-Israeli relationship as being of a “special” nature. In a press conference on May 12, 1977, President Jimmy Carter said, “We have a special relationship with Israel...our number-one commitment in the Middle East is to protect the right of Israel to exist, to exist permanently, and to exist in peace....” In February 1993, Secretary of State Warren Christopher observed that the “relationship between the United States and Israel is a special relationship for special reasons. It is based upon shared interests, shared values, and a shared commitment to democracy, pluralism and respect for the individual.”¹ The reasons for this view and the extent to which they apply can be debated. However, even though the relationship has not always been a cordial one, every president since Truman “has felt a special commitment to Israel’s security and well-being that has not been matched by a comparable commitment to any other state in the region.”²

The U.S. has also been fairly successful in cultivating positive relationships with most governments in the region, with the exception of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Libya. Yet, perceptions remain that it is a very one-sided relationship in favor of Israel. Many Arabs view the U.S.-Israeli relationship as hypocritical and exclusive to the Israelis, despite an extensive amount of aid to Arab countries in the region. The Islamists depict the relationship as “the crusader-Zionist conspiracy,” bent on the eradication of Islam.³ This belief is at the root of anti-U.S. sentiment within these groups.

The U.S.-Israeli relationship forged out of a time in which the U.S. and the Soviet Union competed for control following World War II. The relationship continues to thrive despite a dramatic change in the global environment. The relatively well defined American and Soviet spheres of influence and interest within the Middle East vanished as a result of the abrupt collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. The U.S., now the world’s only super power, found itself in a position to be able to influence the region as never before. Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990/1991 demonstrated the level of prestige the U.S. had achieved, as the U.S. was able to build an unprecedented coalition to include Arab countries in order to oust the Iraqi’s from Kuwait. Yet, despite this influence and prestige, the U.S. has been ineffective in securing a successful peace in the Middle East. Is the U.S. aligned too much on the Israeli side? What is the nature of the “special” U.S.-Israeli relationship? What is the nature of the U.S.-Arab relationship? Is there truly a one-sided relationship with Israel at the expense of the Palestinians? What should the U.S. policy focus be in this volatile region, post-Cold War? This

paper will examine the U.S. relationship with the Israelis and the Arabs, contrast the U.S. role in a Cold War and post-Cold War environment, and suggest an alternative role the U.S. must assume to be effective.

WHAT IS ZIONISM?

In order to properly examine the nature of the “special” U.S.-Israeli relationship we must first examine the events that led to the creation of Israel. That beginning starts with the movement that drove many Jews, especially Eastern European Jews to want their own homeland-Zion. Zionism as a concept has been a part of the heart and soul of many Jews since they were dispersed centuries ago. It must be noted, however, that not all Jews are Zionists and not all Zionists are Jews. During the late eighteenth century a “Jewish enlightenment” arose particularly in Germany and the United States, which became known as “Reform Judaism, calling for greater assimilation into Western society.⁴ Western Jews, both in the United States and Europe, were increasingly dropping their allusions to Zion as a Jewish homeland, content with the security and stature they had achieved in Western culture. Unfortunately, Jews in Eastern Europe and Czarist Russia, who greatly outnumbered their Western brethren, did not have the same security or opportunities, and suffered much persecution. To them, the only way to end the persecution was to gather and rebuild their state in the land of Palestine.

With that in mind, Zionism is defined in two ways. The first definition (cultural) states that Zionism is a “Nationalist ideology stressing solidarity of the Jewish people.” Cultural Zionism was more a sense of universal brotherhood rather than an autonomous Jewish enclave. The second definition (political) states that Zionism is a “movement to create or maintain a Jewish state, especially in Palestine/Israel.”⁵ Memories and folklore of Zion, as the Jews called their homeland, was an integral part of many believers’ mindset and a binding aspect of the Jewish religious and social experience.⁶ However, Zionism as a movement didn’t truly arise until the 19th Century. Authors, such as Moses Hess, a German Socialist and Leo Pinsker, an early Zionist had immense influence in Europe calling for the Jews to have a land of their own.⁷ In 1839, Rabbi Judah Alkalai, an obscure preacher who lived near Belgrade, published a Hebrew textbook titled *Darchei Noam* (Pleasant Paths), in which he alluded to the need for establishing Jewish colonies in the Holy Land as a necessary prelude to the Redemption.⁸ Throughout his years, Rabbi Alkalai continued to write on this issue and eventually settled in Palestine as an example to his followers. Before his death, he developed a small group of followers. One of his

disciples was Simon Loeb Herzl, the grandfather of Theodor Herzl, who is viewed by many as the father of political Zionism.

The Zionist movement continued to expand in late-nineteenth century Europe driven in large part by continued intolerable conditions in Russia and Europe. The accession in 1881 of Alexander III in Russia ushered in an especially difficult period in which all ethnic minorities, viewed as threats to the throne, were subjected to widespread discrimination. The Jews were subjected to extraordinary persecution, confined away from the countryside in city slums and purged from their professions, in response to anti-Jewish decrees that came to be known as the "May Laws, because they were issued on 3 May 1882."⁹ This period would last until the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. An example of the savagery of Alexander's Russia occurred in 1903 in Kishinev, Bessarabia, in which a pogrom or state-sponsored massacre took the lives of 45 Jews, wounded 86 more and destroyed over 1500 Jewish homes and shops.¹⁰ For many Jews the growing animosity and discrimination only solidified the belief "that there is no salvation for the people of Israel unless they establish a government of their own in the Land of Israel."¹¹

The dawn of political Zionism came with the arrival of Theodor Herzl in 1895. An early chapter of Herzl's diary became known as *Der Judenstaat*, or loosely translated, *The Jewish State*. Within this chapter, Herzl penned his thoughts on the issue of the Jewish State asserting that Jew-hatred was an ineluctable fact of life. Indeed, the Jewish question was neither social nor religious. "It is a national question, and in order to solve it we must, before everything else, transform it into a political world question, to be answered in the council of civilized peoples."¹² *Der Judenstaat*, published in 1896, introduced Zionism to European readers. Herzl was unlike others who were calling for the separate Jewish State. He was a prominent lawyer and journalist, German-speaking, and an agnostic. Because of his background, he sought to resolve the Jewish question through collaborative efforts of leading European powers. He was personally responsible for giving the movement its endurance and popular appeal. However, with the exception of Eastern European Jews, he encountered much skepticism and angst among Jews and gentiles alike.

Despite efforts to the contrary, Herzl was successful in convening the first Zionist Congress, which was held in Basle, Switzerland with 204 delegates attending. They began their sessions on August 29, 1897. In his opening remarks to the Congress, Herzl began, "We are here to lay the foundation stone of the house, which is to shelter the Jewish nation."¹³ The Zionist Congress would approve "the encouragement of settlement in Palestine by Jewish agricultural workers, laborers, and artisans; the unification of all Jewry into local and general

(Zionist) groups; the strengthening of Jewish self awareness and national consciousness; diplomatic activity to secure the help of various governments.”¹⁴ The Congress also established as its instrument a permanent Zionist Organization called the Jewish Society. Herzl was elected president of the Zionist Organization. He later wrote in his diary, “If I were to sum up the Basle Congress in a single phrase—which I would not dare make public—I would say: in Basle I created the Jewish State.”¹⁵

But, as Zionism’s followers were growing, so was anti-Zionism. Hermann Cohen and Ludwig Geiger, both representatives of German Jewry saw in Zionism a movement, “fully as dangerous to the German spirit as are social democracy and ultramontanism.” Herzl’s ideas were branded as treasonous by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and his actions as “Zionmania,” by American Reform Rabbis, who declared in their official platform, “We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine...nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish State.” Zionist sympathizers were purged from American Hebrew Congregations, while throughout Europe Jewish leaders viewed Herzl’s actions as a provocation to anti-Semitism.¹⁶

If Theodore Herzl was the father of “political” Zionism, Asher Ginsberg, known by his pen name, Achad HaAm, was the father of “cultural or spiritual” Zionism. HaAm, a Russian-Jewish writer born in Ukraine of a Chasidic family, insisted that political Zionism “was hardly more than an artificial concoction of Europeanized Western Jews.” He viewed the proper role of Zionism as awakening the spiritual and cultural spirit of the world’s Jewish population, with Israel as the “national spiritual center.”¹⁷ He became one of the most feared and respected critics in the Zionist world. Ultimately, the “culturalists” were able to form a faction within the Zionist Congress and were successful in including a resolution affirming that “the education of the Jewish people in a national spirit is an essential part of the Zionist Program.”¹⁸

At the turn of the century and throughout the period preceding W.W.I, Zionism was struggling, not only with its identity but also with the failure to secure support for Palestine. With the notable exception of Eastern Europe, Zionism had basically failed to excite the masses. Herzl had failed to secure backing for a homeland in Palestine and as time went on the fissure within the Zionist movement grew large. Orthodox Jews were suspicious of Zionism, while the Western Jews opposed it with vigor. It all took its toll on Herzl and he died in 1904 at the age of 44 leaving a vacuum in the leadership of the Jewish movement. By the outbreak of W.W.I, the Zionist Organization found itself in a very weak bargaining position, with most foreign ministries displaying indifference or outright hatred to Zionism.

ORIGINS OF ANGLO-ZIONIST ALLIANCE

Prior to the outbreak of World War I, British and French interest in Palestine was growing, due in large part to security concerns with the Suez Canal and access to Iraqi oil. Turkish offensives in 1915 and 1916 against the canal fixated British attention on the vulnerability of the canal.¹⁹ British policy in the Mediterranean was also a function of its interest in India. India, as the “brightest jewel in the imperial crown,” required control of crucial sea routes through the Middle East and around the African continent.²⁰ Following the war, British presence in the region was solidified when the League of Nations awarded them the mandate for Palestine and Mesopotamia (Iraq). The mandate enabled the British to protect their oil interests, secure access to critical sea routes to India, and build a transcontinental railroad through Europe, Turkey, and to the Persian Gulf in Kuwait.

In 1915 correspondence between the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon and Sherif Husayn, the Hashemite Emir of Mecca stated Britain was prepared “to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif,” with the exception of those “portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo.” For their support the British expected the Hashemite Arabs to join the war effort against Turkey.²¹ The correspondence, which became known as the “Husayn-McMahon Correspondence,” was very controversial in that the Arabs believed the British had promised them Palestine. McMahon disputed that he ever meant to give Palestine to the Arabs. The source of the confusion was the omission of the name ‘Palestine’ in describing the area. Husayn angrily withdrew from the agreements in 1916.²²

During the winter of 1915-16, the British, French, and Russians concluded secret negotiations, which led to the post-war division of Ottoman-held Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine into French and British administered areas. The Russians wanted allied recognition of their rights to control the Turkish Straits. This agreement became known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, named for Sir Mark Sykes, the British representative and Charles Francois Georges-Picot, the French emissary. France received much of northern and western Syria, while the British would rule lower Iraq and have influence in the region below that of France, as noted in the illustration. The Arabs were essentially left with the Arabian Desert. It did not take long for the British to realize that the Sykes-Picot agreement was not a guarantee for British interests in Palestine. In April 1917, a special Committee on Territorial Peace, led by Lord Curzon, emphasized the importance of British Postwar control of Palestine.²³ British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George informed his ambassador in Paris, Lord Bertie that “the French will

have to accept our Protectorate over Palestine," noting that "Palestine is the strategic buffer of Egypt."²⁴ This period essentially marked the beginning of the question of Palestine.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann then the acknowledged spokesman for the Zionists was well respected among the British elite. At the time, he was a chemistry professor at the University of Manchester and had developed several friendships at the highest levels of government, to include Arthur Balfour.²⁵ Weizmann's allusions to a "British protectorate over a Jewish homeland" in Palestine drew tremendous interest.²⁶ The British, led by the new prime minister and foreign secretary Lloyd-George and Arthur Balfour, were sympathetic to the Zionist cause and viewed the Jews as a client people useful as a wedge for British domination in the region. In the Jews they saw the potential "for an ordered and developed Arabia and Middle East."²⁷ They also recognized that Sykes-Picot was not as solid of an agreement as needed and saw the partnership with the Zionists as opening up new possibilities.²⁸



FIGURE 1 SYKES-PICOT

Sykes continued to be a major player in assuring that British and Zionist interests came together. He did so without revealing the existence of the agreement he had signed with Georges-Picot. Sykes met with Weizmann on 7 February 1917 and hinted that the British government might be prepared to support a Jewish homeland in Palestine, but observed that the Zionists would have to take the initiative in persuading allied governments to support the idea. Britain had already launched a military offensive against the Turks across the Sinai and into Palestine. It was at this point that the British began having misgivings about the territory their diplomacy had given away. Increasingly, they saw the territory of Palestine as key to their

interests. On 6 April 1917, Sykes told Georges-Picot that Britain's military efforts in Palestine would have to be taken into account at the Peace conference, thus altering Sykes-Picot.²⁹

French President Poincaré wrote in his diary on 17 April, "that in London our agreements are now considered null and void."³⁰

For Weizmann and the British War Department the urgency for a government declaration implying unilateral British control over the Holy Land was tremendous. Lloyd-George and Balfour were prepared to force the issue through. However, to ensure that the declaration would not encounter serious opposition at a later peace conference, the prestige and influence of the American government was deemed essential. The British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Robert Cecil cabled President Wilson's closest advisor, Colonel Edward House on 4 September 1917 to ascertain whether Wilson would support such a declaration. The original draft, which included the statement, "that Palestine should be reconstituted as the National Home" of the Jews was deemed too extensive of a commitment. Ultimately, Wilson concurred with the follow on version opening the way for final implementation of the declaration.³¹ The letter was penned on November 2, 1917 to Lord Rothschild, the President of the British Zionist Federation, declaring "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...."³² This declaration, along with the arrival in Palestine of British soldiers set the stage for three decades of conflict-ridden British rule in Palestine.

AMERICAN POLICY-POST WORLD WAR I

In the aftermath of World War I, the U.S. suddenly found itself thrust into the world arena, although it would prove to be limited. The U.S. seemed content to have the British and the French maintain their predominate roles in the region. The main concern was security and access of U.S. commercial interests in the region. From 1917 to 1918, President Wilson had enunciated a series of principles, which came to be known as Wilson's Fourteen Points. They essentially called for the right of "self determination," for inhabitants of the Middle East (former Ottoman Empire).³³ While giving the U.S. a small role in the planning, Wilson's Fourteen Points were never seriously adopted. However, revelations of the secret agreements (Sykes-Picot) reached between France and Britain for the partition of the former Ottoman Empire caused much embarrassment for the countries involved. Both countries supported Wilson's call for self-determination. On 9 November 1918 they issued the following joint declaration: "The object aimed at by France and Great Britain in prosecuting in the East the War let loose by the ambition of Germany is the complete and definite emancipation of the peoples so long

oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations.”³⁴ Unfortunately, this did not stop the two countries from pursuing their colonial ambitions in the region. They recognized that the U.S. had already declared its support for the Balfour Declaration and affirmed that Britain was “clearly the best mandatory for Palestine, and Arabia.”³⁵

Wilson viewed self-determination for the people of the Middle East as the price for U.S. participation in the war. When the Council of Four powers (France, Britain, U.S., and Italy) assembled in Paris following the war, Wilson suggested the formation of a Commission to determine popular opinion in the region and report back to the peace conference. Although France and Britain agreed to the idea of a commission, neither provided delegates to take part in its activities. This was the first significant American involvement in the political affairs of the area. The King-Crane Commission led by Henry King and Charles Crane, both U.S. officials, traveled to Palestine, Syria and Lebanon in the summer of 1919. Their stated mandate was to “study conditions in the Turkish Empire with reference to possible mandates...concerning the conditions, relations and desires of all the peoples and classes concerned....”³⁶

Pertaining to the treatment of Syria, the commission recommended a mandate with a limited term to be decided by the League of Nations. The goal of the mandate was to “train the Syrian people to independent self-government as rapidly as conditions allow...to see that complete religious liberty is ensured...and that a jealous care is exercised for the rights of all minorities.” In addition, Syria was to be placed under one mandatory with its boundaries determined by a “special commission on boundaries.” Emir Feisal, who was the son of the Sherif of Mecca, was to be made the head of the new state. The commission further recommended that “the extreme Zionist program for Palestine of unlimited immigration of Jews,” be severely reduced and limited with the “project for making Palestine distinctly a Jewish Commonwealth” ended. The commission felt this would allow Palestine to be included as part of the new Syrian state. Finally, the commission recommended the mandate go to the U.S. as the first choice, followed by Great Britain. Similar recommendations were made for Mesopotamia and the remainder of the Ottoman Empire.³⁷

The findings of the report were subsequently ignored. Ultimately, the King-Crane Commission had the unintended consequence of strengthening the burgeoning Arab populist nationalism movement separate from Westernized influence.³⁸

Throughout the remaining period between the two great wars, U.S. concern centered on the application of an “open-door” policy allowing unimpeded American participation in

commercial dealings within the region. The most significant area for American involvement was the oil industry.³⁹ The growing U.S. interest in Middle East oil would solidify the strategic value of region by the end of W.W.II.

THE BRITISH MANDATE

The Arabs rightly feared the impact of the Balfour Declaration on the issue of Palestine. Unlike mandates in Syria and Iraq, in which the mandate was to prepare the peoples of those regions to rule themselves, the Palestine Mandate was clearly different. Charged to carry out the Balfour Declaration, which was to help create a “Jewish national home” in Palestine, Arabs viewed the Mandate as holding them in bondage until the Jews achieved the majority.⁴⁰

The volatile issue of immigration and Jewish settlements essentially began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the advent of the first and second *Aliyah*, or ascent to the Holyland. These amounted to the immigration of about 80,000 Jews to Palestine. Overall, there would be five *Aliyahs*. Between 1932 and 1935, the Jewish population would nearly double to 375,000. In the eighteen months following Israel’s declaration of independence another 340,000 immigrants arrived. Initially concentrated in the major urban areas of the country, they soon realized that population dispersal into Arab evacuated areas was needed.⁴¹

Based on these fears, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill issued a white paper on 1 July 1922 in an attempt to clarify intentions of the Balfour Declaration. The paper denied that the British government meant to make Palestine as Jewish as England was English (an expression coined by Weizmann) or to give preferential treatment to Jews over Arabs. It included a provision that restricted Jewish immigration to conform to Palestine’s “absorptive capacity.”⁴² The Zionists viewed this development as in conflict with their interests. However, fearful of losing British support, Weizmann signed the paper. The Arabs rejected it totally.

To further inflame the Zionists, the British partitioned Palestine into two sections, with the area east of the Jordan River given to Emir Abdullah (Feisal’s brother) and named Transjordan. Abdullah, who was intent on restoring his brother to power in Syria (having been removed in 1920), had succeeded in reaching Amman in 1921, much to the chagrin of the British, who wanted to avoid any conflict with the French in the region. Churchill met with Abdullah on 26 May 1921, proposing that he administer the territory in the name of the mandate, recognize Transjordan as an integral part of the Palestine mandate, and establish an orderly government in Amman. In return, he would receive a monthly subsidy with trained advisors and the assurance of an independent Transjordan at some future date.⁴³ This was Britain’s first explicit

admission that Transjordan was included in the zone of Arab autonomy as promised by McMahon to Hussein in 1915.

Due in part to the conflicting nature of the principles of self-determination, wartime promises, and plans for partitioning the region, the League of Nations granted a Mandate for Palestine to Great Britain on 24 July 1922. The Mandate stated, “that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration...in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people....” They were further advised to take into account the needs of the non-Jewish residents of the region to ensure their civil and religious rights were respected.⁴⁴ This would prove difficult, as the Arabs who believed that participation in “Mandate-sanctioned” institutions would signify their acceptance of the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration, refused to participate.⁴⁵

The period before and immediately after the Mandate was marked by little sense of law and order. In February 1920 a party of Arab raiders attacked Jewish settlements in Metulla and Tel Chai. In April 1920, during the season of Nebi Musa (a traditional Arab counterpart to Easter), Arab were celebrating and listening to nationalist agitators. The crowd was soon out of control and violence began. The rioting and violence continued over the next three days before the British could regain control. A Jewish self-defense organization called the “Haganah” would find its origins following the 1920 riots. Throughout 1921, Arab restiveness in Palestine grew. On 1 May 1921 in Jaffa, a group of “Jewish Communists” marched through the center of town in the wake of a Zionist parade. Arab nationalists use it as a pretext to riot. Violence soon extended to the countryside resulting in almost 100 casualties, half on each side.⁴⁶ Following several years of relative quiet, violence broke out again in 1929, in an incident known as the “Wailing Wall” incident. The incident involved the right to worship for the Jews and Arab calls “protect the al-Aqsa against Jewish attacks.” The British were unable to control the situation and on 23 August 129 violence broke out throughout Palestine. When order was restored on 28 August, 133 Jews had been killed, 399 wounded. The Arabs had 178 casualties, 87 of them dead.⁴⁷

Unclear policies and a struggle for a sense of fairness concerning both the Arabs and the Jews often marked Britain’s Palestine Mandate. Because of Jewish political pressure in London, international policies seemed to back the Zionist interests, while in Palestine, British officials seemed to favor the Arabs. The situation worsened with the rise to power of Hitler and his Nazi party in Germany. What was once a trickle of immigration soon became a flood, as no other country, to include the U.S. and U.K. were willing to take the refugees. That left Palestine as the only option. The continued rise in Arab anger concerning Jewish immigration gave root

to the Arab revolt of 1936. The violence began almost in a haphazard manner, but soon expanded into a large scale uprising as Arabs poured in from the surrounding areas. The initial outburst was followed by a mass work stoppage against the immigration policy. Unfortunately for the Arabs, the effect of the work stoppage was most crippling on the Palestinian Arabs.⁴⁸

The violence and work stoppage prompted the British in 1936 to send out a commission of inquiry led by Lord Peele. The Peele Commission Report recommended partition, giving a small area of Northern and Central Palestine to the Jews, but leaving most of it to the Arabs.⁴⁹ To the Palestinian Jews this was further evidence that the British were backing off on their commitment to the establishment of a Jewish homeland and to an increase in immigration. Feelings of anger and impotence on both sides would continue to mount.

The major consequence of the Arab uprising was the rise of Jewish military activity. The riots of 1929 were the capstone event, leading to the realization that training would have to include all “able-bodied” Jewish youth in Palestine. Haganah, which was the precursor of today’s Israeli Defense Force found its preeminence during this period. The Arab revolt ended in 1939, with a toll of 6768 casualties, of whom 2394 were Jews, 610 were British, and 3764 were Arabs.⁵⁰

In 1939, the British issued another White Paper, which announced that the mandate would expire in ten years, whereupon Palestine would become fully independent. Meanwhile, immigration would be limited to 15,000 each year until 1944, after which it could only continue with Arab consent. The Jews felt powerless further confirming that the British commitment was weakening. The Arabs saw it as further postponing their independence, while also not stopping Jewish immigration and land purchases. The Zionists began to increasingly look to the U.S. for support. On 3 October 1943, the Emergency Committee on Zionist Affairs appealed to the U.S. Government for “direct intervention to secure abrogation of the White Paper.”⁵¹ Protests from Zionists and non-Zionists alike flooded the White House for action. However, while it appeared that the Roosevelt Administration was saying the right things to the Zionists, they were also appeasing the Arabs at the same time. Bartley C. Crum, a noted non-Jewish attorney and a Truman-appointed member of the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry concluded in his book, *Behind the Silken Curtain*, “Since September 15, 1938, each time a promise was made to American Jewry regarding Palestine, the State Department promptly sent messages to the Arab rulers discounting it and reassuring them....”⁵² Despite the calls for help and growing indications of Nazi atrocities, American pressure on the British was not forthcoming.

President Roosevelt was the first American President to really have to face the Palestinian dilemma with an eye on how the U.S. would be involved. However, the Roosevelt

Administration was never quite able to develop a focused policy or strategy for peace in the region. Faced with the specter of winning the war, they were never able to reconcile the conflict between the military, economic, and strategic necessity to pacify the Arab world, while also effectively dealing with the humanitarian claims of the Zionists, which primarily centered on the Jewish refugee problem.

In 1942 American Zionists adopted what was called the Biltmore Program, which called on the British to rescind the White Paper and to make Palestine a Jewish state.⁵³ Identical resolutions were introduced in both the House and the Senate designed to put the U.S. legislature on record as favoring the creation of a Jewish state. The House Committee on Foreign Relations held public meetings on the resolution in 1944 during which Zionist, anti-Zionist, and Arab nationalist views were heard.⁵⁴ However, at a time when America needed the support of the Arab world in the war efforts, the resolution was postponed as a result of recommendations from both the State and War Departments.

In March 1944, Roosevelt assured Zionist leaders that the U.S. Government had at no time given its approval to the White Paper, and he hoped that, "full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish National Home."⁵⁵ Weizmann would meet with Roosevelt in 1942 and 1943. Roosevelt agreed to dispatch a representative to visit with Saudi leader Ibn Saud in an attempt to gain a more friendly position on the Zionist issue. He sent a veteran Middle East person by the name of Colonel Halford Hoskins. As early as 1939, British friend of Ibn Saud, H. S. John Philby had developed a plan to allow the whole of Palestine to be allocated to the Jews. In turn the British would make £20 million available to the Saudi ruler for the purpose of resettling Palestine Arabs in his country. On several occasions, Ibn Saud had declined to commit himself to the plan. It was Hoskins role to attempt to gain his acceptance. However, Ibn Saud sensed that the U.S. had no intention of pressing him to accept the Philby scheme and therefore rejected the proposal.

Roosevelt's sentiments for the Zionist case were masked however by a growing anti-Zionist position within the U.S. Undersecretary of State Joseph Grew warned the administration that "Zionist activities in this country will remain the gravest threat to friendly relations between the United States and the countries of the Near East until solution to the problem is reached."⁵⁶ A series of research studies had been conducted over the past two years on Palestine, led by Gordon P. Merriam, Director of the Near East Desk. Their summary presented in January 1945 urged that Palestine be stipulated an international territory under UN trusteeship. Roosevelt accepted the view that an autonomous Jewish commonwealth would provoke a mass Arab uprising. In a letter dated April 5, 1945, Roosevelt assured Ibn Saud that he would not adopt a

stance hostile to the Arabs and that Washington would not alter its basic approach toward Palestine “without full and prior consultation with both Jews and Arabs.”⁵⁷

U. S. -ISRAELI RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR

President Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945 leaving no clearly defined U. S. policy as it pertained to the Middle East. Roosevelt’s Vice President, Harry S. Truman became President faced with the dilemma of a burgeoning Jewish refugee problem and the specter of trying to “contain” the ambitious Russians.⁵⁸ The U. S., still relying on the British to maintain stability in the Middle East, viewed the issue of Palestine with low priority. However, with the lack of a policy focus, coupled with a president distracted by other issues, policy groups on both sides of the Jewish State issue saw a chance to be heard.

Within six days of Roosevelt’s death, Truman was visited by Rabbi Stephen Wise, a leader of the American Zionist movement, who pleaded concerning the plight of the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. Truman reassured Rabbi Wise promising to do everything he could to bring about a Jewish state in Palestine. In a brief note to Churchill on July 24, 1945 during the Potsdam Conference Truman expressed hope that the British government would “take steps to lift restrictions of the White Paper into Palestine,” and that the prime minister would let him have his “ideas on the settlement of the Palestine question so that we can at a later...date discuss the problem in concrete terms.”⁵⁹ Unfortunately, Churchill was defeated for reelection shortly after.

Soon after, Truman sent Earl G. Harrison to study the conditions of the Jewish refugees. In his report, Harrison recommended the immediate evacuation of 100,000 of the death camp survivors and suggested that “Palestine is definitely and preeminently the first choice.”⁶⁰ Truman would endorse this proposal, and in a letter to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee on 31 August 1945 urged that 100,000 Jews be allowed into Palestine immediately. Attlee’s response on 16 September would offer a clue to London’s emerging approach to the Palestinian issue. It rejected the notion that the Jewish refugees had suffered any more than non-Jewish refugees at the hands of the Nazis stating, “we have the Arabs to consider as well as the Jews...In addition to this problem we are engaged upon another related one and this is India. The fact that there are ninety million Moslems who are easily inflamed in that country compels us to consider the problem from this aspect also.”⁶¹

As WWII began winding down, the U.S. Government continued to pressure Britain to end restrictions on Jewish immigration and to accommodate demands for a Jewish state. An Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry went to Palestine in 1946, and after interviewing mandate and

nationalist officials, called for a continuation of the mandate. In a more controversial move, the Commission also recommended the admission of 100,000 European Jewish refugees at once and to end all restrictions on Jewish land purchases. The new British Labor government rejected this proposal. However, in 1947 the British government turned the Palestine problem over to the UN.

The UN responded by creating another investigatory body, the UN Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP). The result was the 1947 Partition Plan, which turned out to be anything but a peaceful one.



FIGURE 2. 1947 UN PARTITION PLAN

It basically partitioned Palestine into seven sections, of which Arabs controlled three and three by Jews, with Jerusalem and Bethlehem administered by the UN. While neither side liked the plan, the Jews viewed it as a step forward while the Arabs threatened to go to war. Growing strife and violence on both sides would continue and in March 1948, the U.S. representative to

the UN suggested that the Partition Plan be put off for a ten-year cooling off period under a UN trusteeship.⁶² While this compromise satisfied the Arabs, the Zionists were not. International enthusiasm for the American proposal was very weak and the talk in the U.N. General Assembly moved toward seeking a truce and the possibility of an interim government for Palestine.

Following WWII, U.S. strategic and economic interests in the Middle East would grow dramatically. The area was seen as vital, not only for its vast oil reserves but also as a communications center. However, the issue of Palestine would become an obstacle in dealings with the Arab countries. By 1947 American petroleum companies owned approximately 42 percent of Middle Eastern supplies, largely in Saudi Arabia, but also in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Iraq.⁶³ There was a real fear among corporate interests that Washington's support for Zionism would endanger corporate health in the region. Kermit Roosevelt, a former oil company executive echoed these concerns when he wrote, "The process by which Zionist Jews have been able to promote American support for the partition of Palestine demonstrates the need for a foreign policy based on national rather than partisan interests."⁶⁴

Both the State and Defense Departments voiced concern for the importance of American oil holdings. The military Joint Chiefs of Staff reminded Truman that access to Middle East oil was a matter of critical national importance, one that would have to be evaluated in any governmental decision on the Palestine issue.⁶⁵ Secretary of Defense James Forrestal was especially vocal on this issue. As early as 14 July 1946, he wrote: "America has lost very greatly in prestige in the Arab world by our attitude on Palestine."⁶⁶ Forrestal was clearly alarmed by the influence exerted by the American Zionists, as were an increasing number of colleagues in the State Department who also wanted the politics taken out of the issue of Palestine. The truth was that this was a very political issue and there was tremendous pressure exerted on the Truman Administration, not only by Zionists, but by Congress as well.

On 14 May 1948 the Jewish Agency Executive Committee, meeting in Tel Aviv formally declared those parts of Palestine under Jewish control were now the Independent State of Israel. This was the date that the Mandate was scheduled to end. The Committee also announced that the provisions of the 1939 White Paper limiting Jewish immigration and land purchases were null and void.⁶⁷

The U.S. took the lead in being the first country to formally recognize the new Jewish State. In a statement issued by the White House, President Truman said: "this Government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof. The United States recognized the provisional

government as the *de facto* authority of the new State of Israel.⁶⁸ This informal recognition was given at the same time the Austin proposal was being discussed in the U.N. General Assembly, giving many observers the impression that the U.S. did not have any defined goal or policy in the region to guide its decisions. Formal recognition was extended in January 1949, despite the objections of Secretary of State George Marshall and other advisors.

Truman's quick recognition was surprising considering he was surrounded by advisors who were not in favor of the establishment of the Jewish State. General Marshall feared that the Jewish State could not be defended if the Arabs attacked. He was also aware that a major mobilization would be required to accomplish such a defense causing more troubles at home. Loy Henderson, who headed the Near East Division of the State Department, believed that a Jewish State would impair America's relations with the Arab world and open up the region for the Russians. James Forrestal, the first Secretary of Defense, opposed the Jewish State because of the strategic location and its oil. He also felt that recognition would leave the door open to the Russians.⁶⁹

However, pro-Zionists like Clark Clifford, Truman's Special Counsel, Benjamin Cohen, State Department Counsel, as well as Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann were able to influence Truman through sheer numbers and passion in favor of their cause. Their advice was admittedly based on domestic political considerations and the need to solidify the Jewish vote in the 1948 elections. A *Newsweek* poll of fifty Washington correspondents shortly before the election indicated that not one of them believed that Truman would win.⁷⁰ As early as September 1947, Robert Hannigan, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, "urged the President to issue a pro-Zionist statement on Palestine," which he said would aid the committee in raising funds for the election.⁷¹ Truman was very cognizant of the immense political pressure within the U.S., as polls showed American Zionist backing were broad.⁷² In describing the pressure the administration was under, Truman wrote in his memoirs, "I do not think I ever had as much pressure and propaganda aimed at the White House as I did in this instance."⁷³ However, while recognizing the Jewish State Truman also believed that the larger issue of Palestine was one that should be dealt with by the U.N. In his memoirs, Truman acknowledged, "My basic approach was that the long-range fate of Palestine was the kind of problem we had the U.N. for."⁷⁴

The Truman Administration presided over a critical period in the burgeoning dilemma of Arab-Israeli relations. He was the first U. S. President forced to confront the issue of Palestine as an active participant. He did so despite a divided administration and conflicting desires to do the right thing as it pertained to the Arabs and Jews. Unfortunately, due to global and regional

security concerns he was often unable to place the emphasis needed to effectively deal with the volatile issue. Concern about Soviet objectives, led Truman to espouse a policy of “containment,” meant to blunt the spread of Soviet influence into the Middle East. This, coupled with the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula only served to place the Palestinian issue as lesser important. Guided by no specific policies or goals for the region, only when international events or domestic pressure forced his engagement, did Truman deal with the matter.

U.S. support for Israel during this period could be characterized as aloof and cautious. Despite attacks from five neighboring Arab states following Israel’s declaration of independence, the U.S. continued to maintain a posture of non-participation favoring U.N. efforts instead. This included the continuation of the arms embargo to the region agreed to in December 1947.⁷⁵ The hope was by denying arms to the region conflicts would be avoided or reduced in nature and scope. There was also a fear of a superpower conflict in the region and the alienation of the Arab world. Forrestal crudely told Truman’s pro-Israeli political advisor, Clark Clifford, “You just don’t understand. There are four hundred thousand Jews and forty million Arabs. Forty million Arabs are going to push four hundred thousand Jews into the sea. And that is all there is to it. Oil – that is the side we ought to be on.”⁷⁶

President Eisenhower was elected during a time of world uncertainty promising to confront and contain communism. One man, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, would essentially define his foreign policy for the next eight years. A deeply religious man, he believed America had a moral advantage over the rest of the world and identified America with the universal longing for freedom. His view of the world would move U.S. policy from one of containment to a policy of liberation. Dulles regarded the Middle East as crucial to winning the Cold War and viewed any Soviet role in the Middle East as a direct threat to American national security. Thus, it was Dulles’ goal to create an American Middle East Alliance against Communism. However, his conception of alliance was a paternal one, not one of equality. The resulting inflexibility meant that non-aligned states, such as Egypt moved toward more cooperation with the Soviet Union.

In February 1955, Israel attacked an Egyptian fort in the Gaza Strip. This incident was the first major encounter between the forces of the two countries since the takeover of Gamal Abdul Nasser. Soon after, Egypt made an urgent request to buy arms from the U.S. The negotiations broke down, and in September 1955, it was announced that Egypt had concluded an arms agreement with Czechoslovakia, to include heavy tanks and jet fighters.⁷⁷ It was obvious that the source of the arms was the Soviet Union. The Egyptians carefully pointed out that they were driven to buy arms from the Eastern Bloc, only after attempts to buy from the U.S. and

other Western countries failed. This would be an important breach of Western hegemony in the Middle East. In an instant, the Soviet Union was the supplier of arms to the largest and most strategically located country in the Arab world.

Shortly after the arms deal with the Soviet Union, the U.S., together with Britain, agreed to finance the first stage of Egypt's Aswan Dam. This dam was deemed critical for the Egyptians as they attempted to expand the area of cultivatable land and to increase energy resources. However, in June 1956 the U.S. withdrew the offer without warning. Egypt was accused of being unable to raise the funds necessary for the project while also arming itself at a high cost. Nasser returned the insult by suddenly nationalizing the predominantly Western-owned Suez Canal Company. This put the U.S. at odds with its allies Britain and France, who wanted to invade Egypt, take the Suez back by force, and remove Nasser from power. The U. S., again in the midst of an election, did not want a military showdown and would find itself supporting Egypt.⁷⁸

Israel was also experiencing difficulty acquiring arms support. Dulles, seeing no imminent danger to the fledgling nation, felt that Israeli security was better handled by reliance on the U.N.⁷⁹ It appeared that no one in the Eisenhower administration believed that Israel could win a conflict with the Arabs. Apparently, Eisenhower remarked to French Prime Minister Guy Mollet that there was no point in selling arms to Israel inasmuch as 1,700,000 Jews could not possibly defend themselves against 40,000,000 Arabs.⁸⁰ Ironically, it was the French who ultimately provided the Israelis with the requested support.

On 29 October 1956, Israel invaded Egypt. Soon after Britain and France bombarded Egypt's air bases, landed paratroops at Port Said, and occupied the northern half of the Suez Canal. Surprisingly, the U. S., through the U.N. forced the ultimate withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai, as well as British and French forces. Unfortunately, the U.S. had managed to alienate the British, French, and Israelis while doing little to improve its relations with the Arabs. The Eisenhower administration thought its pro-Arab tilt in the Suez affair would persuade Arab governments to back the West against communism. Thus was born the Eisenhower doctrine, which was basically a program "in which the U.S. government offered military and economic aid to any Middle Eastern country trying to withstand communist aggression, whether direct or indirect."⁸¹ Proclaimed in 1957, only Lebanon and Iraq accepted it, while Arab nationalists viewed it simply as an attempt by the U.S. to fill the void in the Middle East left by Britain.

Despite an ongoing negative dialogue between the U.S. and Israel, it was becoming increasingly evident, following the Sinai Campaign that there was a need for some gesture in response to Israel's growing security needs. While the international community was screaming

for sanctions against Israeli aggression, little or nothing was being done in response to the Soviet Union's aggression in Hungary. Eisenhower was faced with a growing political confrontation within the U.S. in response to threats of sanctions against Israel. The effort led by Lyndon Johnson and the Democratic National Committee caused the Administration to refocus its efforts and methodology in reaching a peace agreement in the Middle East. In the end, the U. S. was successful in securing for itself the role of sole arbiter in the Middle East.

The Kennedy Administration brought in a new approach to relations in the Middle East. Unlike the exclusive focus on the threat of communism that was the essence of the Dulles approach, Kennedy demonstrated a greater understanding of the internal problems facing the people of the region. The countries of the region were not viewed as means in the global struggle against communism. Kennedy brought a spirit of confidence and a sense of trust throughout the Arab world. He was able to win the confidence of Arab leaders, to include Nasser by dealing with them openly and on a personal level. His time was also marked by an improvement in relations with Israel. Unfortunately, Kennedy's Arab policy was not allowed time to mature when he was assassinated in November 1963.

The Johnson Administration will forever be defined by its role in the Vietnam War. Because of this focus, U.S. policy towards the Middle East tended to drift. Johnson viewed the Arab-Israeli conflict much like Truman did, in terms of domestic issues. Any Arab good will that had developed with Kennedy was quickly swept away with Johnson. In early 1966, the U.S. suddenly halted vital food shipments to Egypt. This was apparently done because Egypt refused to abandon its quest for long-range missiles and to reduce its armed forces.⁸² This program started under the Kennedy Administration and continued during the first year of the Johnson Administration.⁸³ Mr. David G. Nes, former Charge d' Affairs of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, discussed the problems that occurred during the 1966-67 timeframe in a lecture delivered at the Conference on World Affairs, University of Colorado, April 1968. He recounted several failures on the part of the U.S. government to show any sort of support for Egypt, to include the failure to intercede with Yemen, and the failure of Secretary of State Dean Rusk to visit Egypt. By the end of 1966, it was evident that U.S. policy "was changing from one of limited friendship and normal relations to one of hostility." By 1967, Egypt was convinced that the goal of U.S. policy had become, as Nes put it, "to overthrow the [Nasser] regime in Egypt and to isolate Egypt from the rest of the Arab world."⁸⁴

The actions of the U.S. may have, in part, given Nasser the excuse he needed to make a show of force against the Israelis. Nasser was also being hounded by the Hashemite and Saudi governments for not doing more in reducing the border friction with the Israelis. In addition, the

Soviets asked Nasser to make a gesture to shore up the Ba'athist regime in Syria. As troops from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq moved toward the Israeli borders, Israeli requests for support fell on deaf ears. The U. S. preferred to work through the U.N. However, Nasser would make a fateful decision and blockade the Straits of Tiran, declaring it the territory of Egypt. On 23 May 1967, the State Department sent a message to the Soviet Union. The message said, "The United States will regard any impingement of freedom of navigation in the Strait of Tiran, whether under the Israeli flag or another, as an act of aggression, against which Israel, in the opinion of the United States, is justified in taking defensive measures."⁸⁵ President Johnson sent a personal note to Nasser with much the same language. However, in a meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban on the evening of 25 May, Johnson indicated he did not believe that Nasser had any intention or the strength to attack Israel.⁸⁶ He further cautioned Eban not to initiate any hostility or any preemptive action. By June it appeared no one was willing to come to the aid of Israel. Both Britain and Canada backed out, followed by a letter from Johnson to Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol stating that "our leadership is unanimous that the United States should not act alone."⁸⁷ The American assurance given in 1957 proved to be worthless in its first test, only ten years later.

The Arab armies continued to mass with the intent to "exterminate the State of Israel for all time,"⁸⁸ as stated by Nasser in an address to the Egyptian Parliament on 25 May.

Concerned with world opinion, the Israelis were left to allow the enemy to mobilize. But this waiting would end on 5 June when Israeli Jets began the bombardment of Egyptian airfields. By 4:00 p.m. on June 5, the Egyptians no longer had an air force. Unable to face the truth, Nasser embarked on a campaign to make the world believe U. S. and British airplanes had flown in support of the Israelis.⁸⁹ Throughout the Arab world, violent attacks were mounted against American and British consulates and information centers. Many Arab countries severed relations with the U. S. President Johnson learned of Israel's action at 3:00 a.m. on June 5 and quickly contacted the Soviet Foreign Minister Alexei Kosygin requesting restraint. However, the Soviets, upon learning of the tremendous Egyptian losses, branded the Israeli action as "criminal aggression"⁹⁰ and threatened the Soviet action if the Israelis did not withdraw.

Johnson, not impressed with the Soviet bullying, ordered the U.S. Sixth Fleet to the region, followed by another note to the Soviets reminding them of the U.S commitment to safeguard the integrity and independence of Israel.⁹¹ Both the Soviets and the Americans proposed resolutions in the Security Council, with the Soviets demanding all withdraw from occupied territories, while the U.S. proposed a cease-fire without reference to territory. The

U. S. also insisted on freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba, which served to outrage the Arabs and the Soviets. The Security Council endorsed the American approach and further voted for parallel efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. This was a huge win for the Israelis and an indication of the diplomatic climate changing in favor of the Jewish State. By 9 June, both the Egyptians and the Jordanians had agreed to a cease-fire. Israel would now focus on the Syrians to the north. Shortly after the Israeli offensive began, the Syrians indicated their willingness to abide by the U.N. cease-fire. However, the Israelis were intent on gaining the Golan Heights despite similar assurances to the U.N. The Six-Day War officially ended at 6:30 p.m. on 10 June.⁹²

Israel had clearly won a moral victory as Western nations throughout the world applauded and rejoiced, while every communist country, except Romania severed diplomatic ties. The Soviets then pursued their agenda within the U.N. in an attempt to get the Israelis to withdraw from occupied territory. The Americans provided an alternative without regard to withdrawal or specifying boundaries. They also wanted direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Arabs. Negotiations continued endlessly until on 21 October, the Egyptians sank the Israeli Destroyer Eilat, and on 24 October, the Israelis retaliated by shelling the Egyptian port town of Suez. The resulting urgency then spurred the Security Council to intensify negotiations. The result was U.N. Resolution 242, which essentially called for the “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict,” and “for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.”⁹³ Of, course there was much disagreement among the two sides as to what the wording meant; however the resolution marked a new stage in the search for peace in the Middle East.

The problem of the “Arab Refugees,” although not new, became significant during this period. There were initially two main exodeses of Arabs from Israel. The first occurred in May 1948 following the massacre at Deir Yasin (a village near Jerusalem), and the second toward the end of the year when Israeli forces broke through Egyptian lines in southern Palestine. Despite annual calls by the U.N., supported by the U.S., for their return, the Israelis consistently denied the resolutions. After the June 1967 War, the number of refugees amounted to nearly 500,000, with the majority going to what is now Jordan and the rest to Syria and Egypt.⁹⁴ This refugee problem remains an obstacle to peace to this day.

As a result of the 1967 War, the U.S. became more closely allied with Israel in opposition to vital Arab interests. It also marked a more pronounced polarization of Arab and Israeli ties with the Soviet Union and the U. S. respectively, although the Arabs would question the value of the Soviet relationship. In a memorandum to Johnson on 7 June, his special assistant, Walt

Rostow advised that the Israeli victory created new conditions that the U. S. government should quickly move to exploit.⁹⁵ Johnson bought into the notion that there should not be any withdrawal from territory gained without a viable peace agreement. He outlined “Five Great Principles of Peace” which were viewed by both sides as being favorable to Israel.⁹⁶ The convergence of interests between the U. S. and Israel were virtually complete. This period was viewed as the beginning of the “special” relationship between the two countries.



FIGURE 3-1967 CEASE-FIRE BOUNDARIES

Now that Israel had expanded into the Sinai, Golan Heights, and the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the issue of Israeli settlements would become paramount. For Prime Minister Menachem Begin, the issue was security. Ariel Sharon, Minister of Agriculture explained that “the entire breadth of the West Bank sooner or later would have to be populated with not less than three hundred thousand Jews.”⁹⁷ To coordinate the settlements the government and the World Zionist Organization formulated a joint planning committee with the following guidelines:

The disposition of the [Jewish] settlements must be carried out not only around the settlements of the minorities [indigenous Arabs] but also in between them...with the objective of reducing to the minimum the possibility for the development of another Arab state in these regions.

Throughout the following years, the issue of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories would be at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Following Richard Nixon's election to the presidency in 1968, Nasser initiated a dialogue with the new president and along with Jordan's King Hussein advised him that they were prepared to accept a diplomatic solution with Israel.⁹⁸ In a new administration, the Arabs saw hope for a more evenhanded approach to Middle East issues. Nixon sent a special envoy to the region, former Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton, who returned with the same recommendation. However, in March 1969 Nasser announced that Egypt would step up the shooting across the Suez, starting the so-called War of Attrition.⁹⁹ The war continued to escalate throughout 1969 and into 1970. In an attempt to break the ongoing impasse, Secretary of State William Rogers laid down the peace plan that bears his name in July 1970. The plan called for a 90-day cease-fire, opposed the annexation of Jerusalem, and seemed to ask Israel to give up lands taken in the 1967 War.¹⁰⁰ Both sides reluctantly agreed to the plan. But ultimately the plan failed in part due to Israel's refusal to withdraw to pre-1967 lines. The failure was rooted in the U. S. inability to effectively address Israel's fear of attack and the Arabs fear of Israeli expansion.¹⁰¹ Anwar Sadat was now the Egyptian President, Nasser having died in 1970 of a heart attack. Sadat found himself in a difficult situation. He realized the Israelis were not going to withdraw without a peace agreement, yet he did not want to isolate himself from the rest of the Arab world by agreeing to a separate peace.

On 27 May 1971, Sadat signed an extensive treaty with the Soviet Union allowing the Soviets to train Egyptian soldiers with new Soviet weapons along with an agreement to coordinate all diplomatic moves with the Soviet Union. This revelation served to cement the U. S. relationship with Israel as Washington focused on reinforcing Israel's deterrent strength. Early in 1972 an agreement was reached in which the U.S. continued the supply of jets and sophisticated electronic equipment. This ensured Israel's superiority over the Egyptian-Soviet partnership.¹⁰² It was apparent to everyone involved that the Soviets had no intention of involving themselves in a confrontation with U. S. Their goal was to establish a base in Egypt to be used for strategic purposes, not to involve Soviet soldiers in battle. Sadat's anger and

frustration over this apparent one-sided relationship led to the withdrawal of Soviet advisors and instructors.

Throughout this period of time, terrorism against Israelis all over the world was escalating at the hand of the *fedayeen* (resistance groups). The 1972 Munich Olympics demonstrated the extreme vulnerability of Jewish citizens, as eleven Israeli athletes were captured and shot by Arab guerillas. These attacks only served to harden Israeli policy toward rapprochement with the Palestinians. While world opinion, especially in leftist circles seemed to see the Israelis as tyrannical occupiers of other lands and peoples. The U.N. continued to condemn Israeli reprisals against Arabs, but not the Palestinian actions that precipitated the reprisals.

In February 1973 Sadat launched a “final” diplomatic effort to secure Israel’s withdrawal from the Sinai.¹⁰³ He dispatched his national security advisor to Washington. Nixon received General Hafez Ismael, but refused to make any commitments to lean on the Israelis. In March, Sadat would comment to a Newsweek editor, “Everyone has fallen asleep over the Middle East...But they will soon wake up.”¹⁰⁴ Sadat chose 6 October 1973 for his offensive against the Israelis. It was the Jewish holy day and the Israelis were preoccupied with an election. The Nixon Administration was involved in the Watergate scandal and the weather conditions were considered ideal. On 2:00 p.m., 6 October 1973, the Egyptians at the Suez and Syrians in the north attacked with a vengeance. The Arab armies had achieved a major deception and a crushing blow to the Israeli forces. Unfortunately, the international focus in the U.N. was unable to achieve any kind of solution, with the Arabs insisting on pre-1967 boundaries and adherence to U.N. Resolution 242. The Americans would call for a cease-fire in place. It was a super power deadlock. The Arabs viewed this impasse as one in their favor since they felt that time was working against the Israelis.

Despite Nixon and the Watergate scandal, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger became more personally involved believing that the preservation of Israel was in the U.S.’ interest. He was appalled to learn of the Soviets decision to fan the flames of war by providing massive amounts of arms to Egypt. Yet Kissinger understood the intricacies of the region and reacted in a cautious manner. On 11 October, Kissinger realizing that the Soviets had to be blocked and that the Arabs must realize that they could never win a victory with Soviet weapons alone, convinced Nixon of the need to approve the immediate reinforcement and replenishment of Israeli arms.¹⁰⁵ The shipments were valued at \$825 million. On October 19 Nixon requested an additional appropriation of \$2.2 billion “to maintain a balance of forces and thus achieve stability in the Middle East.”¹⁰⁶ This effort ultimately saved the Israeli war effort.

On 20 October, Kissinger flew to Moscow to meet with Anatoli Dobrynin. Kissinger was able to secure an agreement for a cease-fire that essentially met all U.S./Israeli criteria. The Security Council met on 22 October and approved Resolution 338, which called for direct negotiations between Egypt and Israel for the first time.¹⁰⁷ However, this did not stop the fighting. Both sides continued to clash and on 23 October Kissinger met again with Dobrynin to work out a new cease-fire proposal. Again, hostilities continued. Sadat would make frantic appeals to both the U. S. and the Soviets to intercede and police the cease-fire. Dobrynin proposed a joint U. S./Soviet force, with the threat that if the U. S. did not go along, the Soviets would do it alone. The U. S. immediately mobilized an additional aircraft carrier and the 82d Airborne Division. The Soviets dropped the appeal for a joint peacekeeping mission and accepted the American formulation of a U.N. force. The Security Council approved this on 25 October. The longest and most devastating war between Israel and the Arabs was thus complete.

This period also saw the imposition of an Arab oil embargo on Western nations, especially those deemed supportive of the Israelis. As the situation worsened, so did Israel's sense of diplomatic isolation. Kissinger would use the flexibility as Israel's only supporter to appeal to Prime Minister Meir. Kissinger now the Secretary of State quickly gained much of the U. S. credibility lost in the Arab world following the 1967 War. His consistent and dedicated efforts to achieve a viable peace agreement in the region were truly skillful. In January 1974, Kissinger successfully negotiated a "separation of forces" agreement between Egypt and Israel in which Israel would withdraw from all lands west of the Suez. A U.N. force would then patrol a buffer zone east of the canal. Sadat was so pleased with the agreement that he persuaded Saudi King Faysal to lift the oil embargo. Although it took a little longer, he also succeeded in getting an agreement in the Golan Heights. Kissinger returned to the U. S. a hero.¹⁰⁸

1974 saw the recognition by the Arab heads of state of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat was invited to speak to the U.N. General Assembly, which ultimately recognized the Palestinians right to independence and sovereignty. In 1975, Israel became even more isolated when the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution by a large majority (of communist and Third World states), condemning Zionism as a form of racism.¹⁰⁹

In 1975 Kissinger again launched a series of diplomatic efforts with Egypt and Israel aimed at securing an interim Sinai agreement. The process was so frustrating, especially as it was perceived with Israeli reluctance that President Gerald Ford sent Rabin a personal cable threatening to "reappraise" U.S. Middle East policy. Ford also indicated that the U.S. was willing

to provide compensation to the Israelis for territory they abandoned in the Sinai.¹¹⁰ However, the Israelis were determined not to give up their hard fought natural barriers in the Sinai. Kissinger would depart frustrated at Israeli “shortsightedness” and “intransigence.”¹¹¹

Within days of Kissinger’s departure, Sadat announced he was opening the Suez Canal. As a sign of goodwill, the Israelis announced they were willing to pull back half of their forces 24 miles from the waterway. The gesture was successful in reducing the tension between Jerusalem and Washington. Shortly after, Rabin met with Ford and Kissinger in Bonn, Germany indicating his desire to make additional concessions. On September 1 the agreement between Sadat and Rabin was signed. Although the effort took almost the entire year, Kissinger was ultimately successful, with Sadat agreeing to renounce war as a means of diplomacy, while the Israelis agreed to give up the passes and the oil fields in the Sinai. Unfortunately, Sadat would be seen as a sellout among other Arab capitals, but there wasn’t much they could do about it.

The inauguration of Jimmy Carter in 1977 brought a newfound momentum for peace. But Carter, in his attempts to revive the 1973 Geneva Accords quickly found out that the obstacles were tremendous, especially with the involvement of the Soviet Union. This would force Sadat to move on his own. The Israelis with Menachem Begin as Prime Minister and Moshe Dayan as Foreign Minister provided Sadat with the opening he needed. Both sides willingness to reach a significant peace settlement led to an Israeli drafted peace treaty emphasizing “extensive satisfaction” on the Sinai and possibly an governing Arab entity for the West Bank and Gaza.¹¹² Both Sadat and Begin were intent on preempting the Geneva Conference pushed by Carter and embarked on private negotiations at the behest of Morocco’s King Hassan. In an unprecedented move, Sadat proposed addressing the Israeli Knesset in person. This stunned everyone, leaving the Carter Administration confused and silent. Begin issued the invitation for 20 November 1977. Despite the condemnation of the Arab world, Sadat flew to Jerusalem on 19 November, escorted by Israeli jets and was enthusiastically welcomed the next day. In a meeting that evening, Sadat and Begin would agree that war was rejected as a means of settling a dispute and that Egyptian sovereignty would be restored in the Sinai. Agreeing to meet again, Sadat returned to Egypt to a groundswell of public support.¹¹³

It was quickly apparent that any negotiations would only occur between Egypt, Israel, and the U. S., as the rest of the Arab world condemned the initiative and froze diplomatic relations with Egypt. The overriding issues of the Sinai and the West Bank proved to be difficult to reconcile. The lack of any substantive progress into 1978 caused Carter to extend an invitation for Sadat and Begin to discuss their differences with him jointly at the presidential retreat at Camp David. The meetings were initially described as abrasive with both sides unwilling to give

an inch. Repeated proposals drafted by Carter were turned down. Finally, the issue of the Sinai was separated from the West Bank issues. Sadat offered diplomatic relations in return for withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Sinai. Carter assured Begin that the U. S. would build two air bases in the Negev to offset the bases lost in the Sinai. Suddenly, an agreement was within reach.

The two agreements were entitled a “Framework for Peace in the Middle East,” and a “Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel.”¹¹⁴ For Sadat and Begin, the Camp David Accords represented a personal triumph of unprecedented scope. Both Begin and Sadat would be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in November 1978 as a result of their efforts to achieve peace.

Both sides would meet again in three months to iron out the details as required by the accords. Efforts soon turned to equivocation and frustration. By December 1978, the likelihood of peace was once again clouded. In March 1979, Carter announced a new initiative essentially extending the time required to complete negotiations for elections in the West Bank. The new pact was approved by both and on 26 March 1979 Begin and Sadat signed the formal treaty of peace in a ceremony at the White House.

Ronald Reagan came to office with a new focus and perspective on the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Israel was a sentimental favorite with Reagan and was now termed a “strategic asset.”¹¹⁵ The perspective was one of a Cold War frame of reference. Once again the relationship would be tied to the struggle against the Soviet Union. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was an indication that the Soviets were becoming more aggressive. There was also fear that the Soviets would try to exploit the conflict between Iran and Iraq to move into the Middle East. PLO and Syrian efforts to destabilize the region with Lebanon as the backdrop forestalled much of the peace momentum achieved under Carter. Both were considered radical clients of the Soviets and not credible partners for peace. Thus the Reagan approach to the Middle East was centered on the theme countering the Soviets.

With these factors in mind, Reagan sought to build a coalition of governments opposed to Soviet expansion in the Middle East, including Israel, Egypt Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan.¹¹⁶ This appeared to be a misguided policy because most Middle Eastern governments feared one another or even internal revolts more than they feared the Soviets.¹¹⁷ Yet, this period saw an increase in Western efforts, especially in Washington to court pro-Western Arab governments, while also continuing support to Israel. The U. S. sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia was an example of Reagan’s efforts to solidify the U. S. position in the Persian Gulf. Begin was so incensed about the sale he took an unprecedented step by going

over Reagan's head to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Offended, Reagan elicited the support of former presidents Carter, Ford, and Nixon who declared their support for the AWACS sale.¹¹⁸

Increasingly, Israel was demonstrating a greater hostility toward Arabs, possibly in an effort to weaken the PLO. The Israeli bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor on the outskirts of Baghdad in 1981 and their incursion into Lebanon in 1982 created some serious challenges for the new administration. Additional disputes about settlements in the occupied territories and Israeli concern with the U.S.' growing relationship with Saudi Arabia heightened the anxiety between the two. In 1982, Reagan would make his only policy speech on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The plan called for a freeze on Israeli settlements and withdrawal from occupied territories. Palestinians would receive increased autonomy, with the extent of the Israeli withdrawal commensurate with security guarantees from the Palestinians.¹¹⁹ The Plan went nowhere.

On 6 October 1981, President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by one of his officers during a military parade. Of the four assassins, one survived and it was revealed during the trial that there existed a vast conspiracy both within the Egyptian Army and within Egypt. Many Arab leaders, to include Libya's Qadhafi rejoiced at his death and only a few Egyptians came to mourn him. Once hailed as a hero, he was now apparently scorned. How had Sadat failed? Following the peace treaty with Israel, the Egyptian people had high hopes that money spent on defense could now be spent on settlement and development. That wasn't the case. Since 1952, Egypt's population had tripled, yet cultivatable land was essentially the same. The average Egyptian was being squeezed by inflation, housing costs, and deteriorating infrastructure. With the exception of a few elite entrepreneurs, Sadat was not concerned with economic and social issues. These issues combined with animosity towards peace with Israel and rising Islamic militancy probably created conditions that led to the desire to assassinate Sadat.¹²⁰

For much of 1983, Arab-Israeli peacemaking was centered on achieving a solution to the conflict in Lebanon. In April the American Embassy was bombed and in October the Marine barracks was blown up by a truck loaded with explosives. Two hundred and forty one Marines were killed. Within days of the attack on the Marines, Reagan signed National Security Directive 111, reviving a strategic cooperation agreement with the Israelis.¹²¹ The belief was that the administration would be able to influence Israeli decisions better with the agreement in place. Reelected in 1984 in a landslide, Reagan embarked on renewed attempts to achieve peace in the region. One of the highlights of this engagement was an established dialogue with

the PLO. However, despite occasional success, an “unimpressive” record in promoting Arab-Israeli peace marked the 80’s under Reagan.¹²² Reagan was known for being disengaged and passive when it came to Middle East issues. Although aid continued to flow at unprecedented levels and Israel was pleased at being treated as a “non-NATO ally,” peace remained elusive. .

Events during the November-December 1988 period would dramatically alter the policy environment and have a tremendous impact on the incoming administration of George Bush. First, the Palestinian National Council in Algiers declared the establishment of a Palestinian state. This was followed by Arafat articulating a change in PLO views toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict, renouncing terrorism, recognizing the state of Israel, and accepting Resolutions 242 and 338.¹²³ Secretary of State George Schultz formally announced the same statement and declared the U.S. “is prepared for a substantive dialogue with PLO representatives.”¹²⁴

U. S. –ISRAELI RELATIONS-POST COLD WAR

George Bush took office as the first president to serve following the end of the Cold War. He came to office with no long-range strategic plans or policies for the Arab-Israeli issue.¹²⁵ Substantial economic and military aid for Israel would continue, however. With the PLO situation evolving, preoccupation with the peace process and the effort to begin negotiations with the Palestinians took much of the administrations time. This changed when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Israel was relegated to a marginal role.

The Bush Administration had favored Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, especially in light of their belief that Iran continued to exercise significant influence over many of the terrorist groups in the region, to include Hezbollah. Both the Reagan and Bush administrations provided extensive agricultural subsidies, as well as allowing the export of sophisticated arms and related equipment. In his first days in office, Bush doubled agricultural guarantees to about \$1 billion a year.¹²⁶ Iraq, deeply in debt following the end of the Iran-Iraq war, looked to its neighbors, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for debt relief in the amount of \$80 billion dollars. Iraq also wanted to continue to improve on the strategic relations it had developed with the U. S. during the war, in hopes of receiving “technological” aid.¹²⁷ Neither would happen.

Bush did an incredible job of building an international coalition to counter the Iraqi invasion. Included in this remarkable coalition were Egyptian and Syrian soldiers. He did an even more incredible job in persuading the Israelis not to respond in kind to Iraqi scud attacks. In a war that lasted 100 days, the Iraqis were driven out of Kuwait and deemed relatively powerless for the near future.

One of the promising outcomes of the Gulf War was the extent to which it reopened the door for the Arab-Israeli peace process. Bush and his Secretary of State, James Baker would expend tremendous energy to the organization of the multilateral conference in Madrid in 1991. This was a tremendous feat, in that Bush was able to get Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to sit together at the negotiating table. The conference, which included Prince Bandar Ibn Sultan, was viewed as a “symbolic” success.¹²⁸ While Bush and Baker were successful in getting the players to the table, they chose to step aside and allow direct negotiations. They did not want to get in the role of “delivering” Israeli concessions.¹²⁹

Progress was slow during the tenure of Yitzhak Shamir, but improved once Rabin took office in mid-1992. Bush stressed his commitment to see the peace process through in a speech to a joint session of Congress on 6 March 1991, “A comprehensive peace must be grounded in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of territory for peace. This must provide for Israel’s security and recognition, and at the same time for legitimate Palestinian political rights. Anything else would fail the twin tests of fairness.”¹³⁰ Despite the efforts to work out agreements between Israel and its neighbors, by the time of the Israeli and U.S. elections in 1992, no substantial breakthroughs or achievements had been reached.

The Clinton Administration showed steadfast support for Israel and the Middle East peace process. However, they took awhile to get engaged. In 1993, Israel began a dialogue with the PLO through the assistance of Norway. The resulting Declaration of Principles, which was signed on the lawn of the White House, was only remotely a result of U.S. diplomacy. The U.S. probably played its most vital role in the peace negotiations with Syria. Serving as mediator, the U.S. was very successful in coordinating direct talks between the two bitter enemies, resulting in high-level military negotiations involving the Golan Heights. The Clinton focus on peace in the Middle East, especially during the second half of the administration was all consuming. In the end they were unable to secure a lasting peace concept.

COMPARISON-COLD WAR/POST COLD WAR

WWII propelled a reluctant U.S. into a global role to which it was previously unaccustomed. The global stage was now defined by a bipolar alignment: democracy versus communism. U.S.-Soviet competition for influence in the Middle East became paramount, as the location and the existence of the world’s largest oil reserves were too critical to ignore. For U.S. Middle East policy makers, interests in the region were threefold: containment of the Soviet

Union, access to oil, and Israel's security. Strategically, as well as economically, the Middle East was now intimately tied to the policies of the United States.

For many, the relationship between the U.S. and Israel has been at the center stage of U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East. However, history indicates that the relationship has not always been warm and cozy. It has varied from one of initial ambivalence to its formation in the 40's, to support for its right to exist in the 50's, to increasing levels of military and economic aid from the 60's through the 90's. Throughout the Cold War period, presidents from Truman to Reagan have expressed their commitment to the viability and political independence of all Middle East states, to include Israel. These commitments have been in the form of presidential statements rather than formal documents. These commitments have continued through the George H. W. Bush, Clinton, and into the George W. Bush administrations. Yet, there has always been the belief among Arabs and Israelis that the U.S. would not hesitate to come to the aid of an Israel under attack.

Changing U.S. administrations and governments in Israel and throughout the Middle East have certainly affected the level and type of support given over time. Truman faced with the realization of the Holocaust horrors, the plight of the Jewish refugees, and the tremendous lobbying efforts on the part of Zionist supporters, was forced to act in a manner favorable to the recognition of the Jewish State. He did so despite being surrounded by military and diplomatic advisors who were against such recognition. Eisenhower seemed to be remarkably resistant to pressure from supporters of Israel. The Eisenhower Administration, who was focused on containment of the Soviet Union and international Communism, preferred a more "even-handed" policy in dealing with the Middle East.¹³¹ Although the Arab-Israeli conflict was an element in the overall objective of strengthening the region against Soviet influence, the oil and political value of the Arab states was the key consideration.¹³² When Secretary of State Dulles visited the region in 1953, he discovered that the Arabs were "more fearful of Zionism than of the Communists." He decided that the Truman Administration had "gone overboard in favor of Israel," with which Eisenhower agreed.¹³³ In the effort to be more evenhanded Eisenhower may have gone too far in the other direction. This was evident during the 1956 Suez crisis and war as the U.S. refused to become a source of Israeli military supplies or to counter balance the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal in 1955.¹³⁴

The Kennedy Administration would be the first to express an interest in a regional arms "balance."¹³⁵ Although not a significant increase, the decision to sell Israel Hawk missiles represented a major policy shift. However, Kennedy also sought to open a dialogue with Arab leaders, which concerned Israel, who envisioned a negative effect on the U.S.-Israeli

relationship. Kennedy's reassurances would calm the Israelis, but in the end there were no significant changes in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli issue.

Prior to the 1967 War, the Johnson Administration refrained from engaging in any major effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. U.S. policies sought to maintain a balance in order to reduce the chance of hostilities. This period saw deterioration in U.S.-Egyptian relations and a corresponding improvement in relations with Israel, although minor. In a 1964 meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, Johnson reiterated "support for the territorial integrity and political independence of all countries in the Near East."¹³⁶ This reassured the Israelis in the face of continued Arab threats, but in the end the U.S. was "simply unwilling to give Israel the kind of support the Soviet Union gave Egypt."¹³⁷

The 1967 War created a major shift in the U.S. approach to Middle East policy. At first, the U.S., mired in the Vietnam War, was reluctant to get deeply involved in Arab-Israeli diplomacy. There was a sudden realization that the previous approach to the conflict was a failure. Rather than pursue a policy of stability, Johnson actively sought a settlement of the conflict. He outlined five "principles of peace," which he felt were essential to peace and which ultimately became the basis for the U.N. Resolution 242. Unlike Eisenhower, Johnson supported the Israeli hold on conquered territory pending an Arab commitment to peace.¹³⁸

The apparent mismatch in policy between the two superpowers became even more apparent following the 1967 War. Although the U.S. was still reluctant to become Israel's principal arms supplier, the Soviet Union was not matching the restraint as it pertained to the Arabs. Deteriorating conditions in the Middle East forced the Nixon Administration to confront the issues squarely. Despite an overwhelming defeat by the Israelis, the Arabs immediately began rebuilding aggressively with the aid of the Soviet Union. The Arab-Israeli conflict was continuing unabated, with the Soviets becoming more and more involved. Nixon realized that accommodating radical Arab nationalists was bound to fail. The importance of developing strong diplomatic ties to both Israel and conservative Arab states became apparent as a part of policy.¹³⁹ In making his decision, Nixon stated, "We should give Israel a technological military margin to more than offset her hostile neighbors numerical superiority."¹⁴⁰ Nixon increased the aid provided to Israel from the \$100 million under Johnson to the \$500 million range.

On 23 March 1975, Ford ordered a reassessment of U.S. Middle East policy.¹⁴¹ This was due in part to the failure of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy and the view that the Israelis appeared to be the main obstacle to a breakthrough. Ultimately, the Israelis decided to make tremendous concessions concerning their positions in the Sinai in order to improve relations with the U.S. and Kissinger resumed his shuttle diplomacy. The result was Sinai II, a landmark peace

agreement that succeeded in laying the groundwork for toward political accommodation between the parties and solidified the U.S. as the “central and indispensable” power in the region.¹⁴²

The nature of the U.S.-Israel relationship changed with the advent of President Carter and Prime Minister Begin. Carter would become obsessed with achieving peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the ongoing dialogue with Begin was often characterized by “increased public tension and recrimination.”¹⁴³ In addition, the statesmanship of Egypt’s Anwar Sadat served to reduce the exclusivity of the relationship. Carter had little experience with foreign affairs, but personally dedicated himself to mastering every detail about the issue in order to effect a resolution. He put his reputation on the line twice by engaging in summit negotiations that could have easily failed. Ultimately, he was able to build upon the diplomacy of the Ford and Nixon Administrations, especially the efforts of Kissinger, in effecting a change in the Israeli position and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

The Reagan era brought with it closer ties to Israel and a refocused effort against communism. However, Israel was not the focus of the Reagan foreign policy or even Middle East policy. The sound defeat of Carter in the election gave the Reagan Administration a strong mandate for improving the economy, restoring American self-confidence, and improving the image of the U.S. in the international arena. Attributing many of the world’s problems to the policies of the Soviet Union, the tone of the Reagan Administration was centered not only on containment, but also possible confrontation. As far as the Middle East was concerned, the Administration spoke in terms of “strategic consensus.”¹⁴⁴

Unfortunately, the prospects for Arab-Israeli peace did not advance during the Reagan Administration. Reagan was remarkably uninvolved in advancing the agenda of peace in the region and at times seemed passive to events that served to undermine U.S. presence, such as the Beirut bombing, the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor and PLO positions in Lebanon. For the Israelis, however aid continued to flow at high levels, intelligence cooperation reached new heights, and they enjoyed being treated as a strategic ally. Economic and military assistance reached the \$3 billion level and in 1988, the two countries signed a memorandum of agreement institutionalizing the emerging strategic relationship.¹⁴⁵ Notably, the Reagan era also saw the implosion of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. In addition, the designation of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians would have policy implications for the incoming Bush Administration.

As the first U.S. President to serve in the post-Cold War era, George H. W. Bush was faced with unique international policy considerations as the leader of the world’s lone

superpower. Despite a resume that marked him as the most well prepared President in recent history, Bush assumed office with little or no policy for the Arab-Israeli issue or for that matter the Middle East. He approached the issues slowly and cautiously as the effort to begin negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis occupied much of his time.

In August 1990, the Iraqis invaded Kuwait and appeared poised to go on into Saudi Arabia. Suddenly, the Israeli/Palestinian issue was “relegated to a marginal role.”¹⁴⁶ Bush did a tremendous job in building an international coalition that also included most Arab nations. He also did an incredible job in convincing the Israelis to remain outside the effort, even when they would come under fire from Iraqi Scud missiles. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, however the Israelis often wondered whether the U.S. was as supportive and reliable as in the past. U.S. efforts to push the peace process with the Palestinians were often met with frustration, as the Israelis were not convinced that the Palestinians or the Arab world was prepared for peace. Ultimately, Bush and his Secretary of State, James Baker was successful in bringing the Arabs and Israelis to the negotiating table. They laid a robust foundation for support of the negotiations throughout the region and internationally. However, their initial caution in pursuing peace in the region probably cost them a breakthrough in the process.

Clinton continued to build upon the foundation left from the Bush Administration. Although the Americans were not the main catalysts, the Oslo Accords and the resulting Declaration of Principles on Interim Self Government was signed at a ceremony hosted at the White House. The agreement was basically “an agreement to reach an agreement.”¹⁴⁷ Both Arafat and Rabin made pronouncements to live together on the same soil and to work together to live in peace. This set the stage for a series of landmark agreements, not only between the Israelis and the PLO, but the Israelis and Jordan, as well. Throughout this process the Clinton Administration played a very active role as facilitator, supporter, and mediator. The untimely assassination of Rabin in 1995 would be a blow to the ongoing peace process, with his successor, Benjamin Netanyahu less interested in seeking compromise or accommodation with the Palestinians.

George W. Bush, the son of George H. W. Bush came into the Presidency with focus on reigning in U.S. foreign involvement and approached the Middle East with a hands-off attitude. Shortly after assuming office, Bush announced that his Administration was conducting a review of U.S. involvement throughout the world, with the intent to lessen the impact this was having on our armed forces. This review included the U.S. support to the Multinational Force and Observer mission in the Sinai, which caused many to wonder if the U.S. was giving up its role in the Middle East. Less than a year after assuming office, terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon killing over 3000 innocent people. The focus of the second Bush

Administration was thus solidified on international terrorism, with the Arab-Israeli issue left on its own.

HOW SHOULD THE U.S. ROLE EVOLVE (CONCLUSION)?

During the Cold War, American interest in the Middle East was principally guided by the desire to check the influence of the Soviet Union. Israel, from its establishment as a nation through the fall of the Berlin wall, served as a beacon of democracy in the region and a stalwart pro-Western ally, despite many ups and downs. Now that the containment of Moscow is no longer an issue, is it reasonable to assume that the significance of the U.S. role in the Middle East, especially as it concerns the Israelis, should be allowed to diminish? Stephen R. David, a Political Science Professor at Johns Hopkins University doesn't think so. He believes the importance of the Middle East to the U.S. will remain roughly the same for three reasons. "First, instability and warfare will continue to characterize much of the Middle East. Second, this turmoil will threaten key American interests including access to oil and concerns about the spread of nuclear weapons. Finally, American ties with Israel will be maintained regardless of security considerations."¹⁴⁸ Reich agrees in stating, "the particulars of its [Israel] history that earned it a special place in the American consciousness continue to resonate in the American mind."¹⁴⁹

Although it is not yet clear what role the second Bush Administration will take in regards to the Middle East and, specifically the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is clear that the Middle East is still a region that requires U.S. leadership and involvement. Prior to the tragic events of 11 September, the U.S. found itself searching for a theme to guide its foreign policy. Richard N. Haass, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, identified this search for a theme as an "post Cold War interlude," as American policy makers searched for a role in an international system not defined by a single overwhelming threat.¹⁵⁰ Quandt stipulates that in the Middle East, there are essentially four themes, only one of which is sound.¹⁵¹ The first one involves the pursuit of Arab-Israeli peace in the region. Without a viable strategy for peacemaking between the Israelis and their Arab neighbors, the U.S. will find it increasingly difficult to maintain its stature among all the participants. The second theme is the Clinton policy of "dual containment," involving Iraq and Iran. Although there have been signs of a thawing, especially in regards to Iran, it is inconceivable that the U.S. can continue with a policy that advocates no involvement with either regime. The third theme "targets the spread of weapons of mass destruction," in the region. This raises the issue of inconsistency in U.S. policy, as it appears selective and "hypocritical," especially as it relates to Israel, Pakistan, Syria

and others. Finally, Quandt considers the fourth theme to be the need for the U.S. to place more emphasis on democratization and economic reform in the region. As much of the leadership in the Arab world continues to age, the U.S. will have a golden opportunity to influence the new generation with support and encouragement for democratization.

The U.S., as the world's lone superpower cannot rely on the demonization of the Soviet Union or communism any longer in order to impose its influence on the Middle East. The perception of the powerful bully is ever present, as is the distrust among weaker nations. Much of the hatred aimed at the U.S. in the Islamic world is based on the perception, whether right or wrong, that the U.S. is aligned with Israel to the detriment of everyone else. To overcome these perceptions the U.S. must clearly spell out specific objectives for the peace process, as well as its commitment, not only to Israeli security and survival, but to that of its Arab neighbors as well. It must also strive to be an honest broker, without pre-conceived ideas or solutions. Despite their criticism of U.S. policies, Arabs recognize that the U.S. is the only power capable of achieving a viable solution. Additionally, many of them receive extensive U.S. aid and support, as well.

In looking at what role should be considered for future U.S. involvement in the Middle East, I believe it is critical to establish several assumptions that will lead to the determination of probable solutions. First and foremost, U.S. strategic cooperation with Israel will continue. Second, the risk of Israel being attacked by a neighboring Arab State is virtually non-existent, with the exception of continued terrorism. Third, the Arab-Israeli conflict as it pertains to the Palestinians will continue without focused U.S. involvement. Fourth, it is unlikely that there will be an insurgency of democratization in the Middle East.

I believe it is critical that under these circumstances the U.S. must remain engaged, without giving the impression that it is imposing its will on the states involved. I agree with the assessment of Dr. Sami Hajjar that the U.S. "should conduct a fundamental review of the basis of the peace process and adopt a broader approach to tackle simultaneously the Palestinian-Israeli as well as the Lebanese and Syrian-Israeli tracks."¹⁵² To do this, the U.S. must bring the regional players to the table and serve as facilitator and mediator to ensure that the tough issues aren't delayed for further negotiations. The Israeli's have demonstrated in agreements with both Jordan and Egypt that they are capable and willing to achieve and maintain peace with partners having the same desire. However, this effort will require an international focus, based on agreements reached in Oslo and Taba. The U.S. must not pursue this effort in a unilateral fashion, but engage the goodwill and expertise of diplomats from the European Union, NATO, or even the UN.

The hurdles to this process are huge, in part due to the personalities involved (Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat). They include the borders of the new Palestinian State, status of the Jewish settlements, the sharing of Jerusalem, and the status of Palestinian refugees. But the U.S. should exploit its “special” relationship with Israel by setting minimum standards for continued aid and sticking to them. Israel’s reluctance to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state with defined borders is preventing the peace process from moving forward. Coupled with the continued building of settlements within the West Bank and Gaza, these two issues define the essence of the problem and must be solved. The broad, fundamental approach to these issues would break from the tradition of “incremental” negotiations that have marked previous negotiations and have resulted in little substance. In working to bring the Arabs and the Israelis back to the negotiations, The U.S., in concert with the international partners, must include all parties from the region in the peace negotiations. Only with all the parties involved can a sustained peace effort be consummated. A positive example of this was Secretary of State James Baker’s effort to get all the players to the table in Madrid in 1991.

The U.S. must use its tremendous influence in a positive manner, rather than in a manner viewed by many as arrogant. Selectively targeting rogue regimes, such as Iraq and North Korea, and threatening them with mass invasion is not conducive to building credibility and respect in a region in which people are poor and disenfranchised. Rather, the U.S. should use its influence to further contain and isolate these countries within the context of regional alliances and the international community. The role of hegemon is difficult. In 1953, Oxford professor Albert Hourani explained the decline of an earlier hegemon-Great Britain-by observing that the “fundamental weakness of Britain’s policy in the Middle East was that she never fully recognized the responsibility which her power and dominant influence imposed upon her.”¹⁵³ Michael Hudson in an article published in the Middle East Journal in 1996 suggested that “instead of mobilizing against a so-called Islamic threat, a vigorous initiative to promote dialogue would reduce mutual fears and antagonism.”¹⁵⁴ The power of the hegemon will always be available, but the intellectual effort must be used to effect a viable solution in Middle East peace.

Finally, the U.S. must continue to lead the world community in working with Arab governments and people to expand economic, political, and educational priorities. This should be done in concert with the multilateral peace effort to demonstrate Western resolve in achieving a lasting peace. This is a key proponent of the Middle East Partnership Initiative currently in draft.¹⁵⁵ The Initiative rightly recognizes It is key for the economic longevity of these countries to become more engaged as partners in world trade and commerce.

The U.S. and Israel have and will continue to enjoy a “special” relationship. However, in today’s Middle East that relationship does not have to be to the detriment of the Palestinians or the other Arab countries. Through its military and economic might, as well as its international prestige and credibility, the U.S. is the only nation that can affect a lasting peace within the region. But, it must do so in an even-handed manner, through policies that are clear, stated, and enforced evenly.

WORD COUNT=16710

ENDNOTES

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³⁷ Report of the King-Crane Commission, 28 August 1919; available from <http://www.mideastweb.org/kingcrane.html>; Internet; accessed 18 February 2003.

³⁸ Gelvin, The Middle East and The United States, ed., Lesch.

³⁹ Bernard Reich, Quest for Peace: United States-Israel Relations and the Arab-Israeli Conflict (New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction, 1977), 15.

⁴⁰ Goldschmidt, 247.

⁴¹ Sachar, The issue of immigration is covered throughout Sachar’s book, A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time.

⁴² Ibid. Each British White Paper was named after the incumbent Colonial Secretary. Thus the first white paper was the Churchill White Paper. In 1930, the British issued the Passfield White Paper, which called for establishing a legislative council and supporting the Hope-Simpson Report on land availability. It also was not supportive of a generous immigration policy for the Zionists. In 1939, the British issued the MacDonald White Paper, which proposed the creation within ten years of a unitary Palestine state, with its borders from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean. It allowed for the immigration of 75,000 Jews over a five-year period after which no further immigration without Arab consent. Seen by the Zionists as "act of betrayal," the policy remained in effect until 1947, when the British referred the issue of Palestine to the U.N. <http://www.jajz-ed.org.il/100/concepts/british.html>

⁴³ Sachar, 126.

⁴⁴ "The Palestine Mandate," 24 July 1922; available from <http://www.mideastweb.org/mandate.html>; Internet; accessed 13 January 2003.

⁴⁵ Library of Congress, "Israel-World War I: Diplomacy and Intrigue," undated; available from [http://www.lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+i10023\).html](http://www.lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+i10023).html); Internet; accessed 18 January 2003.

⁴⁶ Sachar, 122-125.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 173-174. See Shaw commission summary below.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 199-200.

⁴⁹ Goldschmidt, 251. Ultimately, the British would appoint four Commissions of Inquiry beginning in 1921 with the Haycraft Commission of October 1921. The Haycraft Commission was initiated to look into the Arab riots in Jaffa and the subsequent raids on five Jewish agricultural colonies in Jaffa. The cause of the riots, incited by the Arabs, was an unauthorized demonstration by Bolshevik Jews, followed by a clash with an unauthorized demonstration of the Jewish labor Party. The Shaw Commission, established in September 1929, was established to determine the cause of rioting following the "Wailing Wall" incident and to propose policies to prevent further incidents. The Commission found that the violence occurred due to "racial animosity on the part of the Arabs...." The Commission also determined that the conflict stemmed from different interpretations of British promises to both Arabs and Jews. It recommended clarification of stated policies and a relook into the issue of further Jewish immigration. In 1938, the Woodhead Commission was established to examine the practicality of partitioning Palestine as recommended by the Peel Commission. In its report the Commission reached the conclusion that partition was not practical. Each of these reports can be accessed at <http://www.us-israel.org/history.html>.

⁵⁰ Sachar, 213-222.

⁵¹ Joseph B. Schechtman, The United States and the Jewish State Movement (New York, NY, A. S. Barnes; 1966), 24.

⁵² Bartley C. Crum, Behind the Silken Curtain (New York, NY, 1947), 36-41; quoted in Joseph B. Schechtman, The United States and the Jewish State Movement, 27.

⁵³ Goldschmidt, 252.

⁵⁴ Mohammed K. Shadid, The United States and the Palestinians (New York, NY, St. Martin's Press; 1981) 28-29.

⁵⁵ Sachar, 254

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 255.

⁵⁸ Steven L. Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan (Chicago, IL; The University of Chicago Press; 1985), 16.

⁵⁹ Sachar, 256

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Reich, Quest for Peace, 20.

⁶³ Sachar, 287.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 288.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 288.

⁶⁶ Hisham Sharabi, Palestine and Israel: The Lethal Dilemma (New York, NY; Pegasus; 1969), 24.

⁶⁷ Goldschmidt, 255.

⁶⁸ Reich, 21.

⁶⁹ Spiegel, 17.

⁷⁰ Evan M. Wilson, Decision on Palestine: How the U.S. Came to Recognize Israel (Stanford, CA; Hoover Institution Press; 1979), 148-149.

⁷¹ Sachar, 290.

⁷² Spiegel, 18.

⁷³ Harry S. Truman, Memoirs Vol. II. New York, 1953, quoted in Sachar, 291.

⁷⁴ Sachar, 279.

⁷⁵ Reich, 22.

⁷⁶ Charles Lipson, "American Support for Israel: History, Sources, and Limits," in U.S.-Israeli Relations at the Crossroads, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (London, England, Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1997) 138.

⁷⁷ Sharabi, 55.

⁷⁸ Goldschmidt, 277.

⁷⁹ Sachar, 483.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 483

⁸¹ Goldschmidt, 278.

⁸² Sachar, 623.

⁸³ Sharabi, 77.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 78.

⁸⁵ Sachar, 627.

⁸⁶ Sachar, 628.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 631.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 633.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 645.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 645.

⁹¹ Ibid., 646.

⁹² Ibid., 658.

⁹³ Ibid., 664.

⁹⁴ Sharabi, 171-181.

⁹⁵ Fawaz A. Gerges, "The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: U.S. Actions and Arab Perceptions," in The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment, ed. David W. Lesch, (Boulder, CO; Westview; 1999), 191.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 192.

⁹⁷ Sachar, 865.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 194.

⁹⁹ Goldschmidt, 300.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 303.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 305.

¹⁰² Sachar, 696.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 748.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 748.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 769.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 770.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 780.

¹⁰⁸ Goldschmidt, 313.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 316.

¹¹⁰ Sachar, 816.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 817.

¹¹² Ibid., 845.

¹¹³ Ibid., 848.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 852.

¹¹⁵ William B. Quandt, "America and the Middle East: A Fifty-Year Overview," in Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers, ed. L. Carl Brown (New York, NY: St martins Press, 2001), 68.

¹¹⁶ Goldschmidt, 346.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 355.

¹¹⁸ Sachar, 877.

¹¹⁹ Quandt, Peace Process, 345.

¹²⁰ Goldschmidt, 343-345.

¹²¹ Quandt, Peace Process, 349.

¹²² Ibid., 379.

¹²³ Reich, "The United States and Israel," in The Middle East and the United States, 234.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 234.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 235.

¹²⁶ Lorenza Rossi, Who Shall Guard the Guardians Themselves?: An Analysis of U. S. Strategy in the Middle East Since 1945 (Bern, Switzerland; Peter Lang; 1998), 170.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 172.

¹²⁸ Quandt, Peace Process, 404.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Reich, "The United States and Israel," in The Middle East and the United States, 237.

¹³¹ Ibid., 9.

¹³² Bernard Reich, The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship (new York, NY, Praeger, 1977) 5.

¹³³ James Lee Ray, The Future of American-Israeli Relations: A Parting of the Ways? (Lexington, KY; University of Kentucky Press; 1985), 9.

¹³⁴ Lipson, 139.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 139

¹³⁶ Reich, The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship, 9.

¹³⁷ Lipson, 139.

¹³⁸ William B. Quandt, American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967 (Washington, DC, Brookings, 1993) 62.

¹³⁹ Lipson, 141.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 141.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴² Ibid., 35.

¹⁴³ Reich, "The United States and Israel," in The Middle East and the United States, 230.

¹⁴⁴ Reich, The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship, 89.

¹⁴⁵ Bernard Reich, "The United States and Israel: the Nature of a Special Relationship," in The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment, ed., David Lesch (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1999) 234.

¹⁴⁶ Reich, "The United States and Israel: the Nature of a Special Relationship," 235.

¹⁴⁷ Sachar, 994.

¹⁴⁸ Stephen R. David, "The Continuing Importance of American Interests in the Middle East after the Cold War," in U.S.-Israeli Relations at the Crossroads, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (Portland, OR., Frank Cass and Company LTD, 1997) 94.

¹⁴⁹ Reich, Securing the Covenant: United States-Israel Relations after the Cold War, 109

¹⁵⁰ Richard N. Haass, "Defining U.S. Policy in a Post-Post-Cold War World," 22 April 2002; available from <http://www.state.gov/s/p/rem/9632pf.html>; Internet; accessed 19 December 2002.

¹⁵¹ William Quandt, "New U.S. Policies for a new Middle East," in The Middle East and the United States, ed., Lesch, 429.

¹⁵² Sami G. Hajjar, "U.S. Military Presence in the gulf: Challenges and Prospects," Strategic Studies Institute (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, March 2002), 55.

¹⁵³ Albert Hourani, "The Decline of the West in the Middle East," International Affairs (London, 1953), 157; quoted in Michael C. Hudson, "To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of U.S. Policy Toward the Middle East," Middle East Journal (Volume 50, NO. 3, Summer 1996)

¹⁵⁴ Michael C. Hudson, "To Play the Hegemon," Middle East Journal 50, No. 3 (1996).

¹⁵⁵ Fact Sheet, "Middle East Partnership Initiative," U.S. Department of State; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/15923pf.html>; Internet; accessed 19 December 2002.

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